

VERTIGO



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FABLES™

NO
94

Rose Red
part one

Willingham
Buckingham
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Jun '10

suggested for
mature readers
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The Barbara Allen Incident

— Chapter One of Rose Red —

FULLFILL
YOUR SWORN
DUTY.

INTERVENE
TO PROTECT
ME.

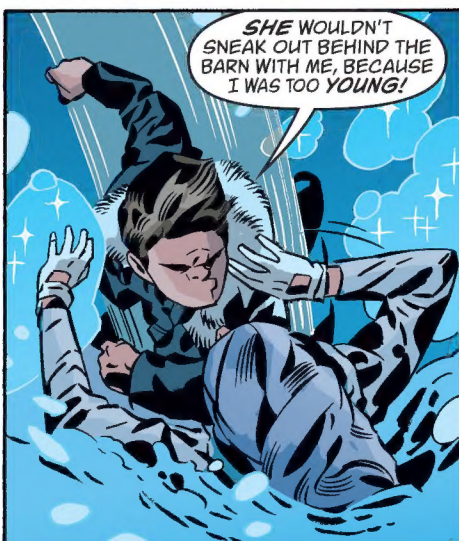
NOW,
WOODCARVER!

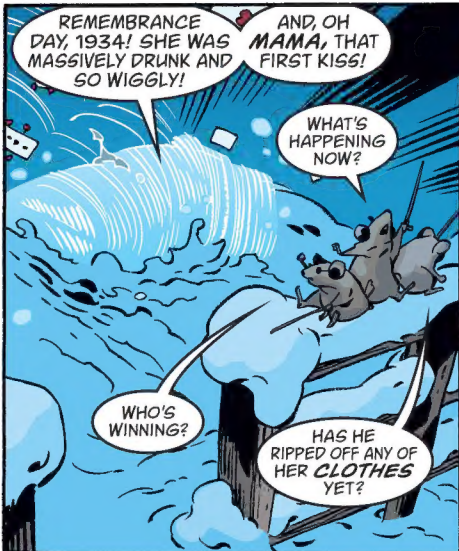
AT LONG
LAST, I STRIKE
YOU DOWN!

I DON'T
THINK SO,
LADY!

BECAUSE
NOW IS WHEN I
FINALLY KICK YOUR
PRETTY BLUE
ASS!









AND THIS IS FOR--

STEP IN. STOP THIS. MY SON'S IN DANGER.

WE'RE NOT PLEDGED TO PROTECT YOUR SON, GEPPETTO. ONLY YOU.



BESIDES, IT DOESN'T LOOK LIKE YOUR SON'S THE ONE WHO NEEDS RESCUING.



ENOUGH OF THIS!

UNHAND ME, CHILD! I'VE NO SCORE TO SETTLE WITH YOU, AND WILL NOT FIGHT YOU.

I'M YOUR MOTHER, EVERY BIT AS MUCH AS THAT WRETCHED TYRANT WOODCARVER IS YOUR FATHER.

AND I LOVE YOU DEARLY.

YOW!

NOW, TO
BE BACK ABOUT MY
REVENGE.

TURN AWAY,
PINOCCHIO. NO CHILD
SHOULD HAVE TO SEE HIS
PARENTS FIGHT.

NOW
WAIT A MINUTE,
YOU TWO!

AND NOW IS
THE TIME, DRYADS. KEEP
THIS ALIEN THING FROM HARMING
YOUR GRANDFATHER OAK'S
NEW ALLY.

SO
IT MUST
BE.

STEP NO
CLOSER, FAIRY
WOMAN, OR WE'LL
HAVE TO DO
YOU GRAVE
INJURY.

NO!

NO
GRAVES AND NO
INJURIES!

STOP
THIS!



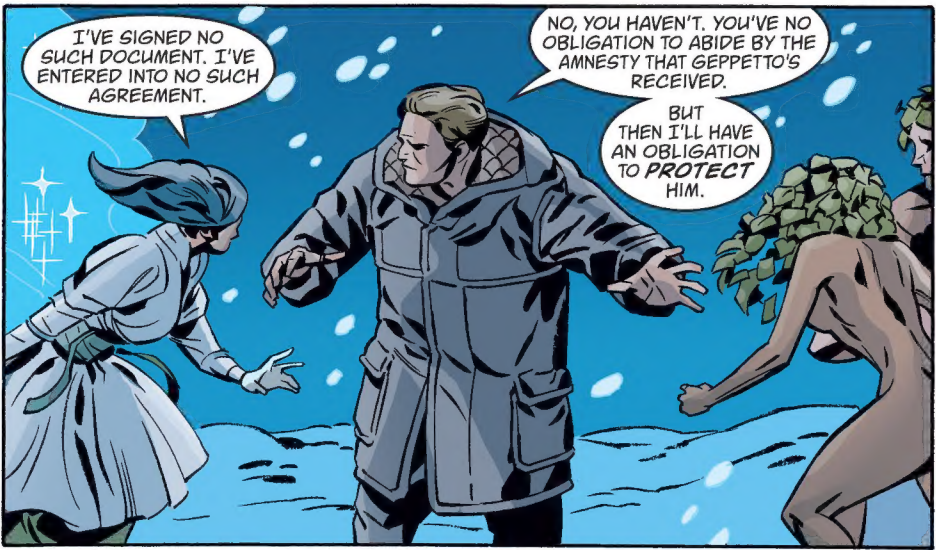
HERE'S THE THING, MA'AM: AS MUCH AS I MIGHT PERSONALLY BELIEVE GEPPETTO HAS A FIRST-CLASS ASS-KICKING COMING, I CAN'T ALLOW IT.

HE'S A CITIZEN OF FABLE-TOWN NOW, PROTECTED UNDER THE GENERAL AMNESTY.



SO? WHAT IS THAT TO ME?

THE TERRIBLE THINGS HE DID TO YOU WERE *PRE*-AMNESTY AND NOT SUBJECT TO FURTHER GRIEVANCE.



I'VE SIGNED NO SUCH DOCUMENT. I'VE ENTERED INTO NO SUCH AGREEMENT.

NO, YOU HAVEN'T. YOU'VE NO OBLIGATION TO ABIDE BY THE AMNESTY THAT GEPPETTO'S RECEIVED.

BUT THEN I'LL HAVE AN OBLIGATION TO *PROTECT* HIM.



AS DO *ALL* LAW-ABIDING CITIZENS OF FABLETOWN. DO YOU WANT A WAR WITH ALL OF US, RIGHT HERE, RIGHT NOW? I SURE DON'T.

TELL YOU WHAT, MISS BLUE FAIRY, GIVE ME TEN MINUTES TO TRY TALKING YOU OUT OF THIS FIGHT.



JUST TEN, CALM, *REASONABLE* MINUTES. WHAT DO YOU SAY?

AFTER ALL THE CENTURIES YOU'VE HAD TO WAIT, IS THAT SO MUCH MORE TO *ENDURE*?



GET UP, ROSE RED. YOUR FARM'S BEING SPLIT BY ANGRY FACTIONS, EVEN AS I SPEAK. AND YET YOU DO NOTHING BUT **HIDE** HERE IN BED.

TRYING TO ESCAPE INTO A PRIVATE OBLIVION.

I DO NOT ACKNOWLEDGE PHANTOM SEVERED IMAGINARY PIG HEADS.

PERIOD!



SIGH

I GIVE UP. I'VE TRIED MY BEST.

GOOD! NOW GO AWAY.



I WILL. RIGHT NOW.

BUT PERHAPS YOU'D BE MORE OF A MIND TO LISTEN TO SOMEONE ELSE.



SOMEONE MORE IMPORTANT TO YOU.

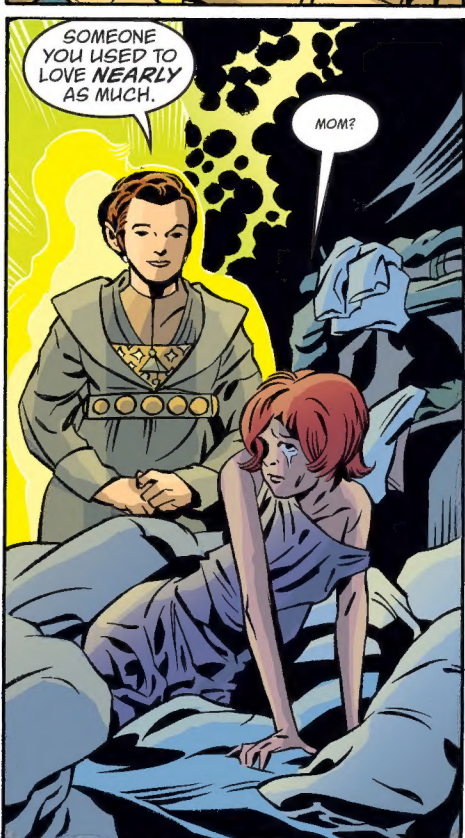


NO, EVEN IN THESE *DESPERATE* TIMES, THIS WOULD BE TOO CRUEL.



SOMEONE ELSE, THEN.

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT NOW? I THOUGHT YOU WERE GOING!



SOMEONE YOU USED TO LOVE *NEARLY* AS MUCH.

MOM?



IS THAT REALLY YOU?

OF COURSE IT IS, SWEETIE. AND LOOK AT YOU! OH DEARIE ME, HOW YOU'VE LET YOURSELF GO.



STILL, ANY WOMAN WHO ONLY LOVED HER DAUGHTER WHEN SHE WAS CLEAN AND PRETTY WOULDN'T BE MUCH OF A MOTHER, NOW WOULD SHE?

LET'S HAVE US A NICE CHAT, LITTLE RED DUCKLING, BEFORE I HELP YOU GET WASHED UP.



YOU HAVEN'T CALLED ME THAT SINCE--WELL, SINCE SNOW WENT AWAY.



OH, MOMMY, I'VE MISSED YOU SO MUCH!

I'VE DONE SO MANY TERRIBLE THINGS!



THERE, THERE.

EVERYTHING WILL BE FINE NOW. JUST YOU SEE IF IT ISN'T.



IT'S BEEN LONGER THAN THE TEN MINUTES SHE PROMISED.

TOO BAD FOR US IF OUR SHERIFF IS ACTUALLY PERSUADING THE BLUE FAIRY TO **FORGO** HER VENGEANCE.

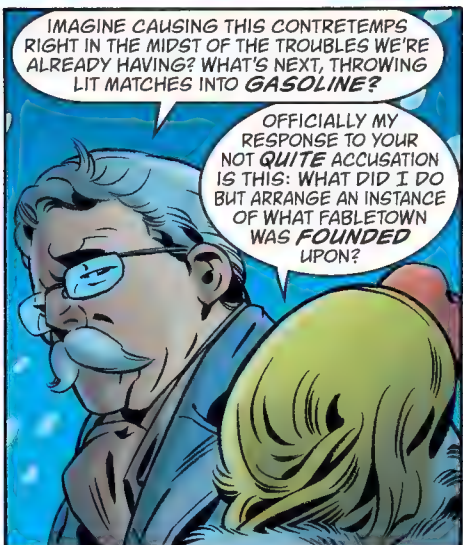
CAN YOU SPRING ME OUT OF HERE, POPS?



LUCKY FOR US, YOU MEAN.

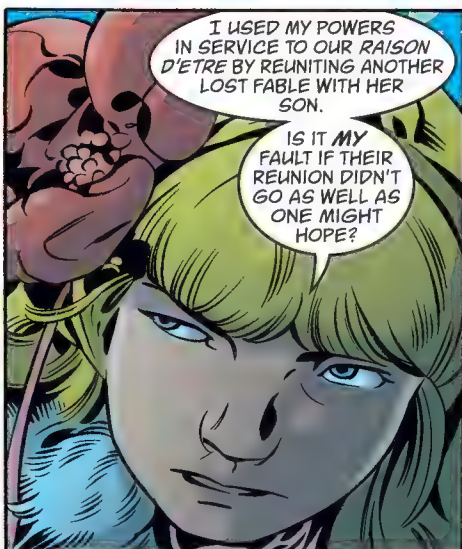
DON'T THINK I DIDN'T NOTICE WHAT YOU DID TO **CAUSE** THIS CONFRONTATION.

AND I WON'T FORGET IT.



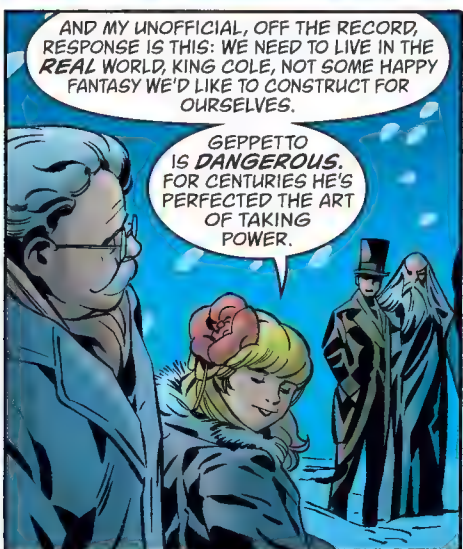
IMAGINE CAUSING THIS CONTRETEMPS RIGHT IN THE MIDST OF THE TROUBLES WE'RE ALREADY HAVING? WHAT'S NEXT, THROWING LIT MATCHES INTO **GASOLINE**?

OFFICIALLY MY RESPONSE TO YOUR NOT **QUITE** ACCUSATION IS THIS: WHAT DID I DO BUT ARRANGE AN INSTANCE OF WHAT FABLETOWN WAS **FOUNDED** UPON?



I USED MY POWERS IN SERVICE TO OUR **RAISON D'ETRE** BY REUNITING ANOTHER LOST FABLE WITH HER SON.

IS IT **MY** FAULT IF THEIR REUNION DIDN'T GO AS WELL AS ONE MIGHT HOPE?



AND MY UNOFFICIAL, OFF THE RECORD, RESPONSE IS THIS: WE NEED TO LIVE IN THE **REAL** WORLD, KING COLE, NOT SOME HAPPY FANTASY WE'D LIKE TO CONSTRUCT FOR OURSELVES.

GEPPETTO IS **DANGEROUS**. FOR CENTURIES HE'S PERFECTED THE ART OF TAKING POWER.




IF WE DON'T DO SOMETHING TO **STOP** HIM, HE'LL DO THE SAME HERE, AND STEAL THE LEADERSHIP OF OUR COMMUNITY.

THAT'S WHY I DID WHAT I DID.




I SET UP A SITUATION WHERE GEPETTO MIGHT HAVE BEEN PERMANENTLY **REMOVED** FROM THE GAME, WITHOUT VIOLATING ANY OF OUR SACRED CODES.

THE BLUE FAIRY'S NOT A MEMBER OF FABLE-TOWN AND THEREFORE UNDER NO OBLIGATION TO FORGET AND FORGIVE GEPETTO'S PAST INDISCRETIONS.




IT WOULD'VE BEEN NO GREAT **CRIME** IF SHE'D KILLED HIM, AND NO INDICTMENT AGAINST ANY OF US.

TOO BAD IT'S BEGINNING TO LOOK LIKE IT WON'T HAPPEN.



THEN, IF YOU'RE GOING TO INDULGE IN THE MESSY WORLD OF REAL-POLITICS, OZMA, YOU'VE AN IMPORTANT LESSON TO LEARN--



--FORGIVENESS ONLY **ACCOMPANIES** SUCCESS. FAILURE IS STILL AND **ALWAYS** A CRIME.

I'LL FIND SOME WAY TO COVER FOR YOU THIS TIME, OZMA. BUT YOU'LL OWE ME. AND DON'T YOU **DARE** ATTEMPT SOMETHING LIKE THIS AGAIN--

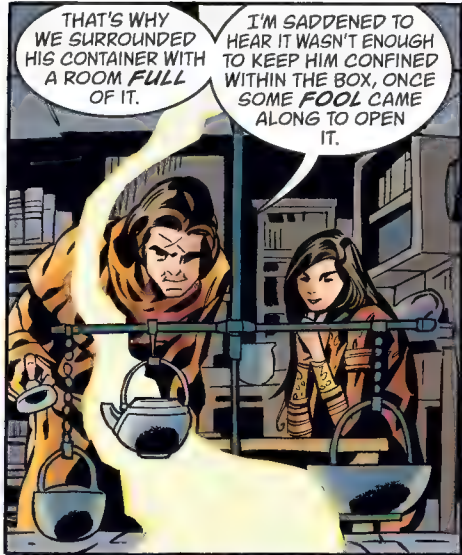


--WITHOUT NOTIFYING ME IN ADVANCE.



DUNSTER HAPP'S COTTAGE, WORLDS AWAY...

YES, THE DARK MAN SEEMED TO HAVE SOME SORT OF ALLERGY, OR AT LEAST AVERSION, TO GOLD.



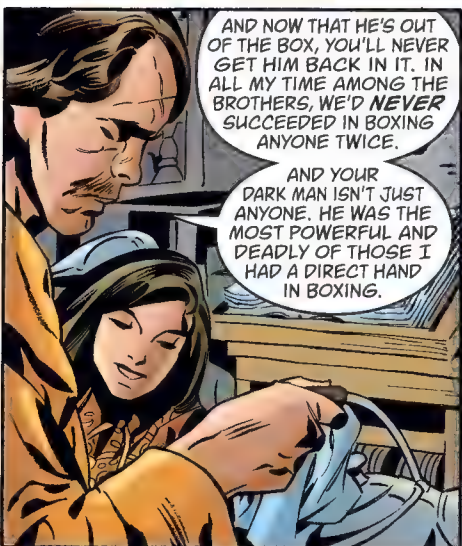
THAT'S WHY WE SURROUNDED HIS CONTAINER WITH A ROOM FULL OF IT.

I'M SADDENED TO HEAR IT WASN'T ENOUGH TO KEEP HIM CONFINED WITHIN THE BOX, ONCE SOME FOOL CAME ALONG TO OPEN IT.



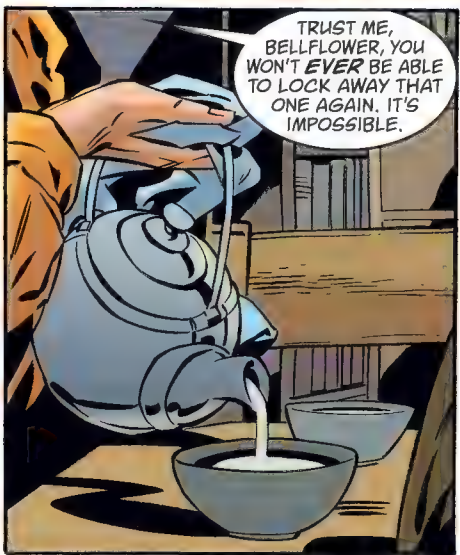
STILL, IT WAS ONLY AN IDEA, AN ADDED PRECAUTION, AND ONE WE COULD NEVER TEST.

WE WEREN'T ABOUT TO OPEN HIS BOX OURSELVES JUST TO SEE IF THE GOLD WOULD KEEP HIM CONTAINED.



AND NOW THAT HE'S OUT OF THE BOX, YOU'LL NEVER GET HIM BACK IN IT. IN ALL MY TIME AMONG THE BROTHERS, WE'D NEVER SUCCEEDED IN BOXING ANYONE TWICE.

AND YOUR DARK MAN ISN'T JUST ANYONE. HE WAS THE MOST POWERFUL AND DEADLY OF THOSE I HAD A DIRECT HAND IN BOXING.

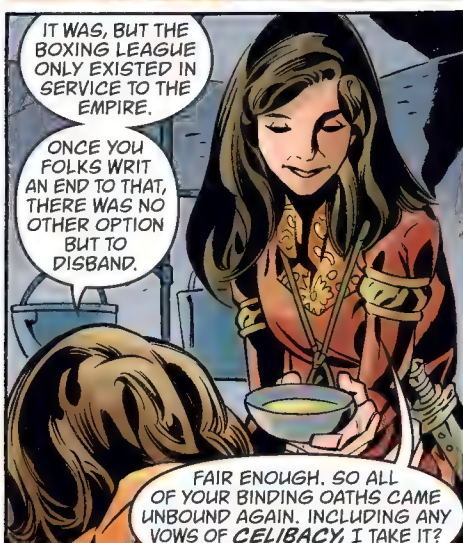


TRUST ME, BELLFLOWER, YOU WON'T EVER BE ABLE TO LOCK AWAY THAT ONE AGAIN. IT'S IMPOSSIBLE.



FINE. I'D RATHER JUST KILL HIM ANYWAY.

HOW DO WE DO THAT?





BACK AT THE FARM...

PULL!
PUT YOUR BACKS INTO IT!

YEAH, YOU MALINGERING BARN-SOURED *THROW RUGS!* GET ME OUT OF HERE!

SO, WE'RE AGREED THEN?

AGREED.



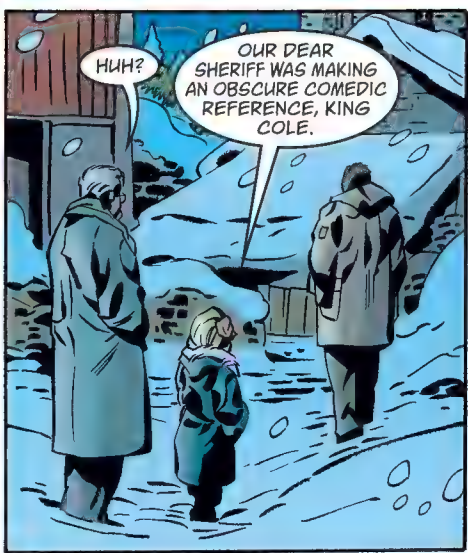
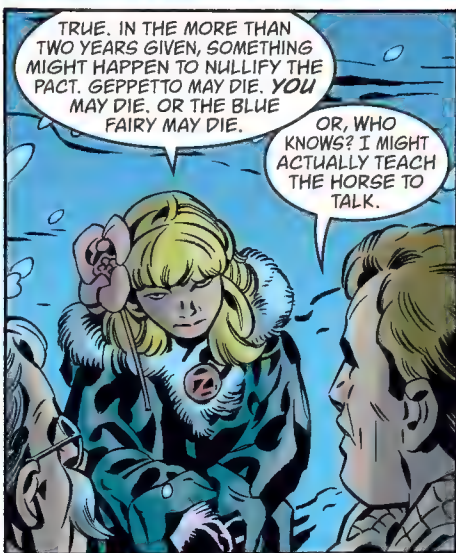
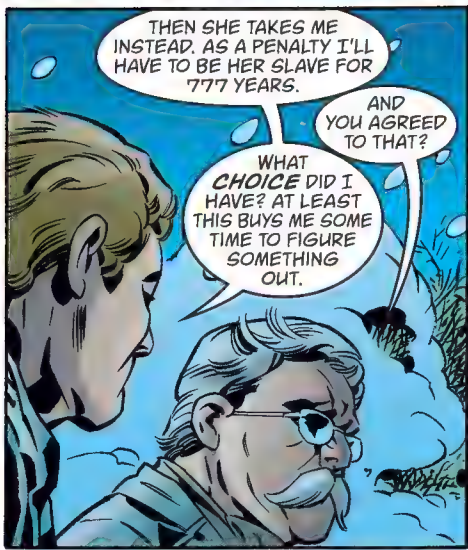
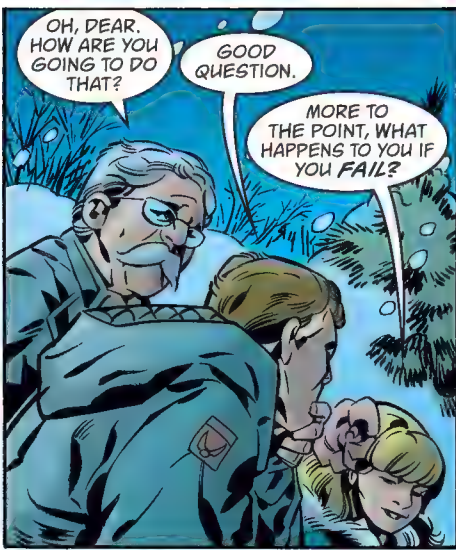
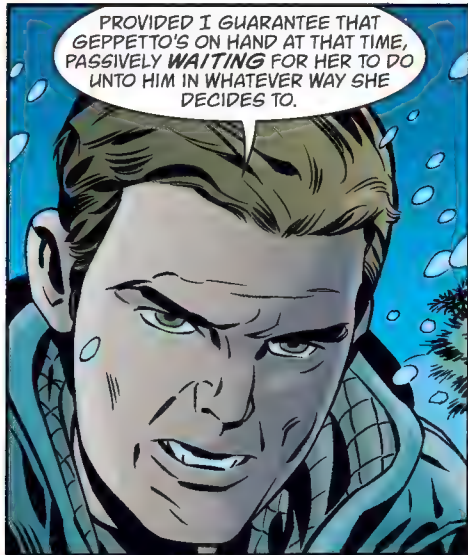
YOU BOUGHT YOURSELF THAT MUCH GRACE, BUT NOT A DAY LONGER.

I'LL RETURN THEN TO *COLLECT* ON OUR BARGAIN.



YOW!

SO WHAT DID SHE SAY, SHERIFF?



DEAR OZMA, I AM, AS PROMISED, ALIVE AND SAFE ON BULLFINCH STREET.

MISTER DARK HASN'T PERCEIVED ME, BUT IT'S A NEAR THING, TAKING EVERY ATOM OF GUILF, CRAFT AND CUNNING I POSSESS TO ESCAPE HIS AWARENESS.



I TELL YOU, MARTY, THIS IS IT. IT'S ALL HAPPENING HERE.

ALL WHAT?



HIS POWER IS ASTONISHING.

THE MURDERS. THE DISAPPEARANCES. THIS--OR SOMEWHERE VERY NEAR HERE--THIS IS THE CENTER OF IT.

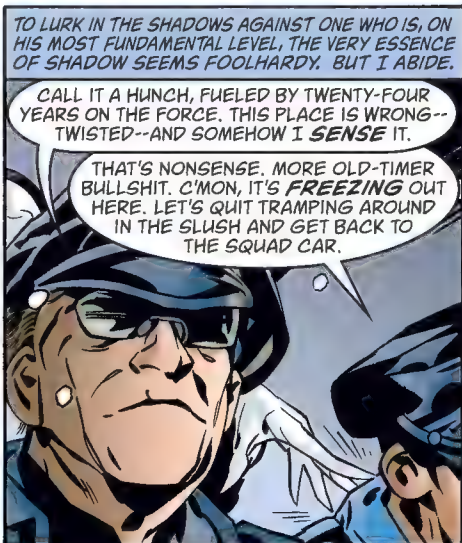
HOW CAN YOU POSSIBLY KNOW THAT, BILL? WHERE'S YOUR EVIDENCE?



TO LURK IN THE SHADOWS AGAINST ONE WHO IS, ON HIS MOST FUNDAMENTAL LEVEL, THE VERY ESSENCE OF SHADOW SEEMS FOOLHARDY. BUT I ABIDE.

CALL IT A HUNCH, FUELED BY TWENTY-FOUR YEARS ON THE FORCE. THIS PLACE IS WRONG--TWISTED--AND SOMEHOW I *SENSE* IT.

THAT'S NONSENSE. MORE OLD-TIMER BULLSHIT. C'MON, IT'S FREEZING OUT HERE. LET'S QUIT TRAMPING AROUND IN THE SLUSH AND GET BACK TO THE SQUAD CAR.



SO FAR.

BUT BEFORE WE DO, I WANT TO TELL YOU SOMETHING. GET IT OFF MY CHEST.

I'VE BEEN SLEEPING WITH KATHY, FOR SIX MONTHS NOW. WE'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR A CHANCE TO TELL YOU.

I KNEW IT!



SLOWLY I'M ASSEMBLING AN UNDERSTANDING OF THIS CREATURE AND HIS ORIGINS, BUT I MUST DO SO USING ONLY THE MOST PASSIVE DETECTIONS.

YOU SHIFTLESS, TRAITOROUS FUCK-HOLE!



ANY ACTIVE ATTEMPT TO EXAMINE HIM WOULD, I FEAR, BE INSTANTLY DISCOVERED. I DARE NOT EVEN TRY TO FASHION THE SIMPLEST SPELL.

I KNEW IT!

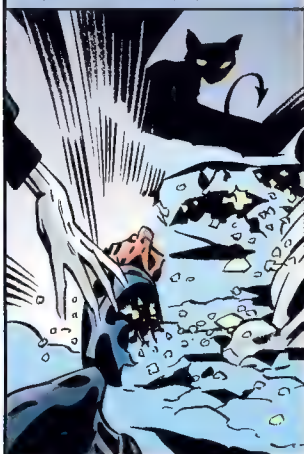


I'VE ALSO LEARNED SOMETHING OF HIS PURPOSE DOWN HERE, AND THE NEWS ISN'T GOOD.

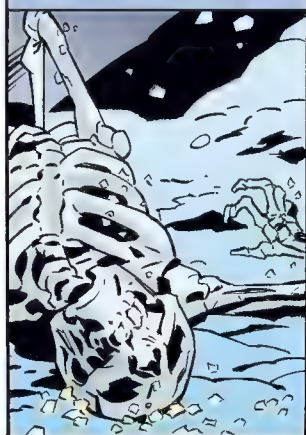
HE'S TURNING THE CITY INTO A CHARNEL HOUSE. MORE ABOUT THAT LATER.



I MUST KEEP MY COMMUNICATIONS SHORT, COMPOSING THEM AS DRIFT MESSAGES, FOR MY OWN SAFETY.



HOPEFULLY YOU'LL BE ABLE TO RECOGNIZE THESE SCRAMBLED DRIFT FRAGMENTS IF AND WHEN THEY FIND YOU, AND THEN ASSEMBLE THEM IN ORDER.



GOOD MEN.

SUCH FINE AND BRAVE MEN.

I CAN PRACTICALLY TASTE YOUR TEETH ALREADY.





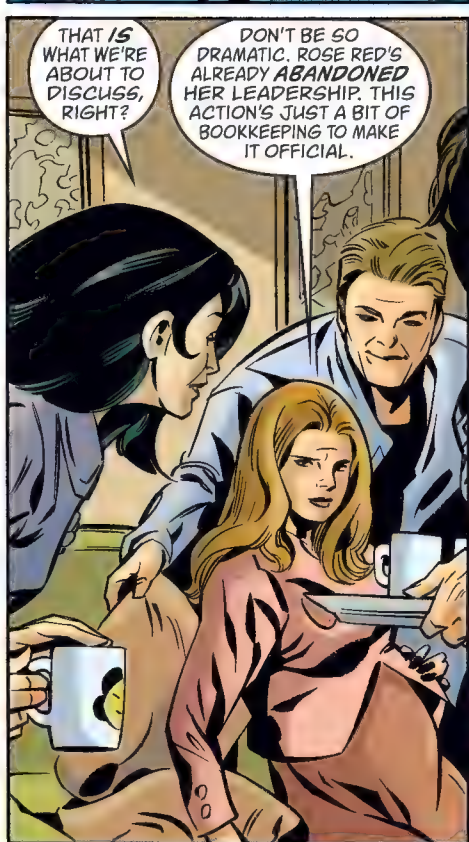
WOLF MANOR.

OKAY, THE HELLIONS ARE ALL PUT AWAY--AT LAST. WE CAN GET TO THE BLOODLETING NOW.



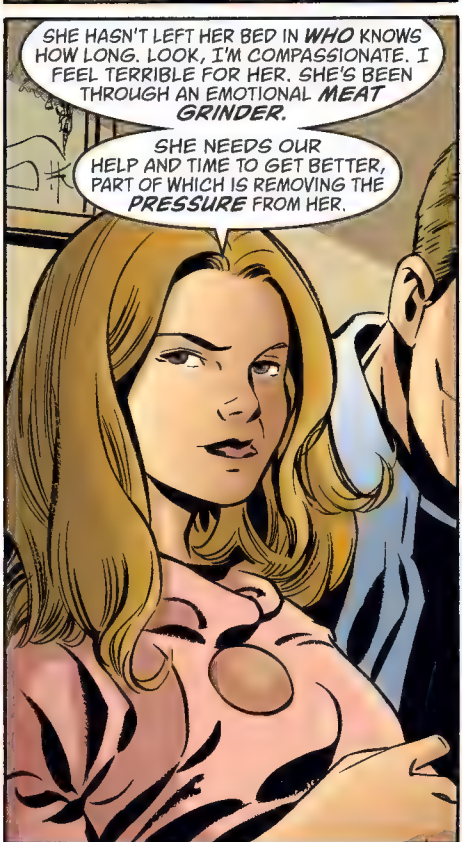
I WOULDN'T CHARACTERIZE IT THAT WAY, SNOW. ONLY--

ONLY THIS MEETING--SO SECRET WE HAVE TO HOLD IT UP HERE AT OUR HOUSE--IS ABOUT **REMOVING** MY SISTER FROM CONTROL OF THE FARM, ISN'T THAT SO, YOUR HONOR?



THAT *IS* WHAT WE'RE ABOUT TO DISCUSS, RIGHT?

DON'T BE SO DRAMATIC. ROSE RED'S ALREADY **ABANDONED** HER LEADERSHIP. THIS ACTION'S JUST A BIT OF BOOKKEEPING TO MAKE IT OFFICIAL.




SHE HASN'T LEFT HER BED IN *WHO KNOWS* HOW LONG. LOOK, I'M COMPASSIONATE, I FEEL TERRIBLE FOR HER. SHE'S BEEN THROUGH AN EMOTIONAL **MEAT GRINDER**.

SHE NEEDS OUR HELP AND TIME TO GET BETTER, PART OF WHICH IS REMOVING THE **PRESSURE** FROM HER.



SHE NEEDS TO GET RID OF HER RESPONSIBILITIES EVERY BIT AS MUCH AS WE NEED TO REASSIGN THEM.

NO ONE CAN ARGUE THAT THESE ARE ESPECIALLY PERILOUS TIMES, THE DARK MAN'S INFLUENCE IS GROWING.




BIGBY AND I HAVE TO KEEP OURSELVES UNDER RIGID CONTROL JUST TO BE IN THE SAME ROOM TOGETHER. GEPPETTO IS MAKING A BID FOR POWER THAT MAY ACTUALLY WORK.

THE 13TH FLOOR GANG IS UNDERGOING ITS OWN POWER STRUGGLE, NOW THAT TOTENKINDER'S LEFT US.



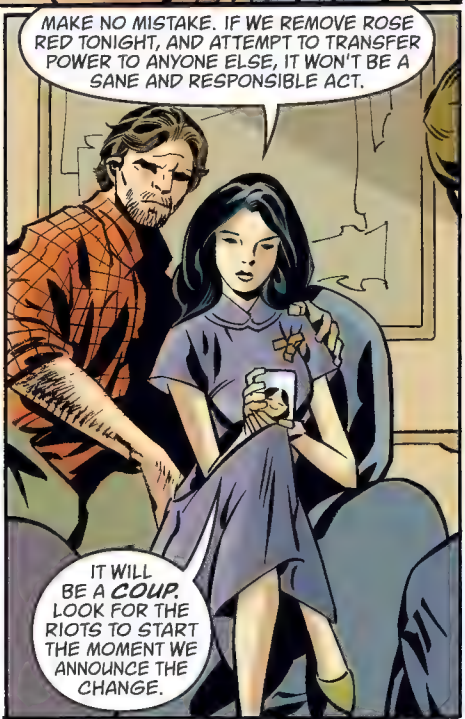
AND EVEN STINKY THE BADGER IS A NEW POLITICAL FORCE. HIS RIDICULOUS NEW RELIGION IS GAINING CONVERTS EVERY DAY.

WE NEED TO COUNTER ALL OF THESE THINGS WITH A STRONG CENTRAL LEADERSHIP, WHICH MEANS A NEW CENTRAL LEADERSHIP.



I DISAGREE. NOW, WITH ALL OF THESE TROUBLES, IS EXACTLY THE TIME WE CAN'T TRY TO OUST ROSE RED AND PUT A NEW LEADER IN PLACE.

THEY LOVE HER UP HERE. WHAT IF WHATEVER STILL REMAINS OF THAT LOVE IS THE ONE THING KEEPING THEM FROM JUMPING AT GEPPETTO'S OFFER?



MAKE NO MISTAKE. IF WE REMOVE ROSE RED TONIGHT, AND ATTEMPT TO TRANSFER POWER TO ANYONE ELSE, IT WON'T BE A SANE AND RESPONSIBLE ACT.

IT WILL BE A COUP. LOOK FOR THE RIOTS TO START THE MOMENT WE ANNOUNCE THE CHANGE.

ONE OF THE MORE REMOTE AREAS OF THE FARM.

THIS IS MARVELOUS!

BRILLIANT!

AT LONG LAST, MY YEARS OF CONFINEMENT ON THE FARM ARE AT AN END. I CAN GO ANYWHERE IN THE MUNDY WORLD.

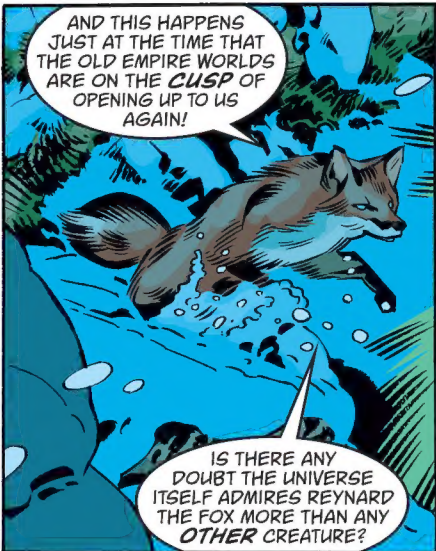
I CAN FINALLY GO DOWN TO FABLETOWN AND--

OH-- OKAY, NOT FABLETOWN ANY LONGER. THAT'S OUT.

BUT ANYWHERE ELSE!

THERE'S NO CITY OUT OF BOUNDS TO REYNARD THE MAN!

AND NO FIELD OR FOREST THAT CAN'T BE EXPLORED BY REYNARD THE FOX!



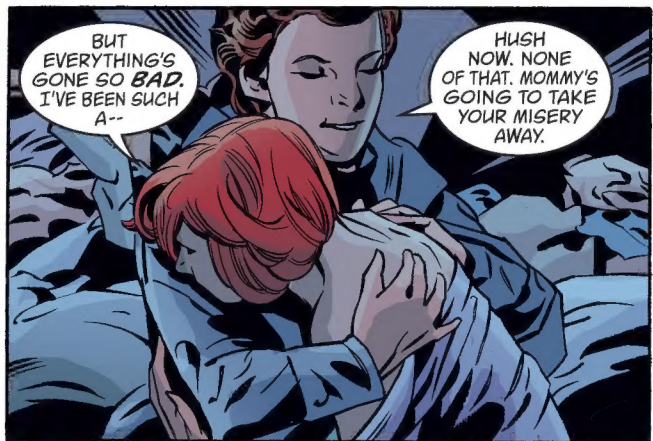
BACK AT THE FARM'S MAIN VILLAGE AREA...

THERE, THERE, MY SWEET LITTLE GIRL. MY RED DUCKLING. MOMMY'S HERE NOW.



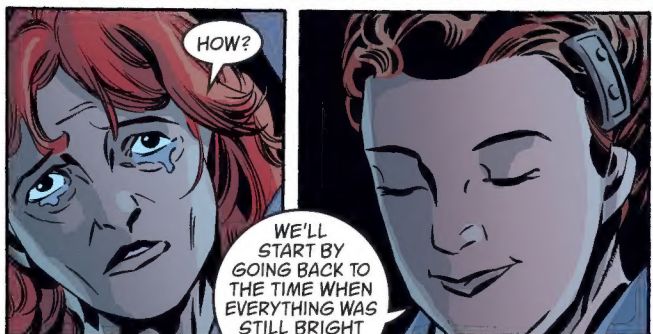
BUT EVERYTHING'S GONE SO BAD. I'VE BEEN SUCH A--

HUSH NOW. NONE OF THAT. MOMMY'S GOING TO TAKE YOUR MISERY AWAY.



HOW?

WE'LL START BY GOING BACK TO THE TIME WHEN EVERYTHING WAS STILL BRIGHT AND WONDERFUL.



"DO YOU REMEMBER OUR COTTAGE IN THE WOODS, ROSEY? OUR LOVELY HOME?"



NEXT: THE STORY OF SNOW WHITE AND ROSE RED.

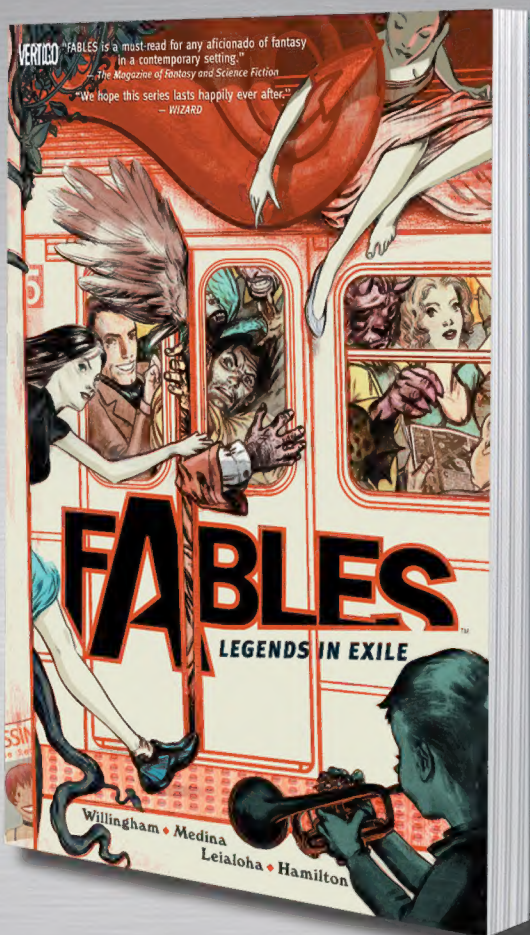
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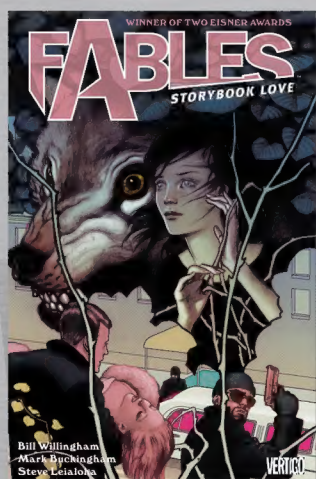
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- VOL. 7: ARABIAN NIGHTS (AND DAYS)
- VOL. 8: WOLVES
- VOL. 9: SONS OF EMPIRE
- VOL. 10: THE GOOD PRINCE
- VOL. 11: WAR AND PIECES
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- VOL. 13: THE GREAT FABLES CROSSOVER
- 1001 NIGHTS OF SNOWFALL



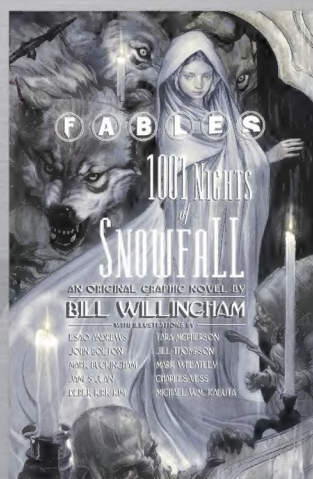
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